



# International Youth Organization

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James Wallace/Founder

6 May, 1988

Dear Friend:

The enclosed draft of 'Questions and Answers about the Newark Education Council' is being sent to you for your review and comment.

The NEC Steering Committee's Community Outreach & Communications Subcommittee is scheduled to complete its final review at our next meeting Wednesday morning, May 18th. Thus, if you have any questions or suggestions, please try to inform me of them prior to that date (824-5900).

New Jersey Bell Telephone has kindly offered to have this piece printed as an informational brochure after the final review on the 18th.

Many thanks for your taking time to review the piece.

With Regards,

*Derek Winans (E.D.)*

Derek Winans

For the Community Outreach &  
Communications Sub-Committee

c.c. Mayor Sharpe James  
Dr. Joel Bloom  
Ms. Terry Burns  
Ms. Florence Deming  
Ms. Phyllis Denbo  
Dr. Valerie French  
Ms. Pam Goldstein ✓  
Mr. Steven Gould  
Ms. Carol Graves  
Ms. Janice Griffin  
Mr. Steven Heller  
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Mr. Alonzo Kittrels  
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Dr. Elena Scambio  
Mr. Joseph White  
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## Questions and Answers About the Newark Education Council

(Prepared 4-12 and 4-19;  
revised 5-2 and 5-5-88)

### I. What is the Newark Education Council (NEC)?

Representatives of major corporations, governmental entities, educational interest groups, community-based organizations, and parent groups who have come together to develop and implement plans to address mutually identified deficiencies in Newark's educational system comprise the NEC.

This coalition of groups is acutely aware of the need to improve the overall quality of education provided to Newark's 54,000 public school students. NEC members believe that without a quality education system that produces high school graduates who are either prepared for college or are readily employable and equipped to become productive citizens of the City, Newark will not achieve its promised rebirth.

Part of the rationale behind this coalition effort is a growing understanding that no individual organization, institution, business, neighborhood group, or level of government alone can achieve the systematic change needed in the Newark school system. Such a change can be achieved only if all of the stakeholders and interested parties are included in the effort and, through inclusion, become committed to developing and implementing plans that will improve the quality of education for Newark's students today and in the future.

### II. What are Some of the Major Issues Now Being Addressed by the NEC?

To date, the NEC has established six issue area task forces each of which will develop detailed assessments of needs and prepare recommendations for specific action plans to address these needs.

These task forces will address the following issue areas:

1. Management and Decision-Making - including the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of current management systems within the school district; the use of

resources and physical plant, and the structure of local school decision-making processes.

2. Academic Performance - including questions of curriculum relevancy, assessment policies and procedures, and the effectiveness of alternative educational models.

3. Instructional Personnel - including such issues as teacher morale, Minority recruitment and promotion policies, individual teacher initiative, and reforms in teacher training.

4. Dropout Prevention - including an examination of such issues as excessive absenteeism, truancy, and the extraordinarily high drop-out rate.

5. Preschool Education - including a review of current model programs, both locally and nationally, and how quality preschool education can influence long term academic improvements.

6. Outside Influences - including an examination of environmental obstacles such as crime, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy and a study of how a coordinated approach by the community, government, and private organizations can contribute to improving the educational climate.

### III. Why is This Effort Different From Past Attempts to Improve Newark Schools?

For one thing, it is rare that so diverse a group representing so widespread a coalition has come together in peace and harmony to address mutually perceived problems affecting our schools. Moreover, this is a working group of individuals committed to implementing systematic changes in order to achieve lasting reform. This is not another study group set up to issue 'position papers' which will gather more dust on more library shelves.

Yet another key difference from past efforts is the commitment by major 'stakeholders' in Newark's future development (business, government, higher educational institutions, labor unions, and the Board of Education itself) to involve parent groups and community-based organizations as equal partners in the process of changing Newark's school system. NEC will not be a top-down, elitist structure dictating decisions from on high but rather an inclusive body encouraging parents and local community representatives to participate as equal partners.

The efforts by the NEC to cooperatively induce major improvement in the education system will ultimately focus on individual schools where the actual teaching and learning take place. Working with local School Improvement Teams, NEC issue area task forces will seek to enlarge the pool of resources, to assist in overcoming perceived impediments to progress, and to identify local community-based organizations, businesses, and fraternal groups to work directly with the school's administrators, teaching staff, support staff, and parents in remedying problems they have mutually identified. In this way, it is anticipated that real improvements can be achieved on a school-by-school basis.

#### IV. What is the Relationship Between The NEC and the Newark Board of Education as well as Other Key Government Leaders?

At every level of decision-making within the two entities, a spirit of cooperation marked by a search for common answers to problems affecting the school system has thus far characterized the relationship. Elected Board members, the Executive Superintendent and staff, and union leaders representing different school staff functions as well as interested professional educators have all participated in the formation of the NEC. Issue area task forces of the NEC all include such representation.

Moreover, the Superintendent has established internal task forces to address similar issues as the NEC has targeted and Dr. Campbell foresees close working relationships between the parallel task forces, including joint meetings and shared research data.

The New Jersey Department of Education is also represented on the NEC Steering Committee and its representatives have been active from the beginning.

In addition, Mayor Sharpe James has pledged strong support and many members of the Municipal Council have participated in both NEC plenary sessions and in some issue area task force meetings.

#### V. How Is The NEC To Be Financed?

The Newark Collaboration Group (NCG) has agreed to accept the responsibility to coordinate the resource-raising function and to be, at least temporarily, the repository for

these funds and resources, which are to be allocated to the Council's use. The intention is to have the Council develop self-sufficiency by the end of an 18-month period so that it can be totally independent of the NCG.

The development plan will be multi-faceted in its approach and will seek to raise both money and other resourcees such as pro bono and contributed goods and services. It is estimated that the Council may need up to \$280,000 to complete the first phase of its work during the period between now and July, 1989.

Thus far, the reaction to the formation of the Council has been very encouraging. Several major corporations including New Jersey Bell Telephone and Prudential Life Insurance have made major commitments for 1988. Similarly, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation has also made a significant grant to the Newark Education Council. The Newark Board of Education has also committed \$20,000 toward the planning activities of the NEC. Additional funding requests are pending.

#### VI. How is The NEC To Be Managed?

The NEC Steering Committee is currently searching for a full-time manager and secretary/research aide to handle those organizational tasks and support functions for which the volunteers who compose NEC will need assistance.

In the meantime, staff of the New Jersey Bell Telephone Co. and the Newark Collaboration Group have been performing organizational functions to help foster the NEC's growth and development.